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WHAT PRICE 'DEFENCE'?

The Editor

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FAIRFIELD: FUTURE OF SHIPBUILDING

Finlay Hart

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JAMES ALDRIDGE on GRAHAM GREENE

'The Comedians'

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Aircraft A. Spence || Transport I. Gradwell || Anglo-Irish Trade C. Desmond Greaves || Students N. Seyd || Steel A. Brown

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FEBRUARY 1966

Two Shillings

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Notes of the Month

WHAT PRICE 'DEFENCE'?

East of Suez . . .
Where there aren't no Ten Commandments
KIPLING

January 17, 1966

We use the words of the title in no vulgar sense. We mean them literally. We are concerned, as every serious person is by now concerned, with the high price of what is called 'defence'. But the vulgar sense is also appropriate. For the question is not only the high cost, whose crippling burden everyone recognises in its effects on the balance of payments and Britain's economic situation. The real question, which underlies and governs the first, is: What is meant by 'defence'? Here the argument rages and the controversy is still unresolved. Once again the Defence White Paper, due to be published in mid-February, is reported to be delayed. Last year's publication was also delayed. But this year we have been promised a really comprehensive review of all commitments with a view to drastic cuts. Delay, according to press reports, has reflected the difficulty of Ministers in reaching agreement on what cuts to make and what contents finally to include. All the Ministers are agreed in principle on the necessity to make cuts in this intolerable burden in order to keep down the annually rising total to a proposed record high figure which is already astronomical. But when it comes to what cuts to make even to keep within this astronomical total, they become like the air traveller confronted with a problem of excess baggage, who finds every piece indispensable, and can only drop a feather-weight here or there. Consequently ordinary people will have to make up Ministers' minds for them, since all our problems here at home, and all the threats now being sounded and demands for new sacrifices in the name of the serious economic situation, are governed by this central question.

Two Meanings of 'Defence'

What is the dilemma? The real core of the dilemma is that two entirely different and even contradictory meanings are being attached to the simple term 'defence'. There is the straightforward old-fashioned meaning understood by the man in the street, that if the country is attacked or invaded all its inhabitants should spring to its defence.

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This is the plain conception of genuine national defence. In this connection it is worth noting that the institution of the Territorials six decades ago was professedly stated to be for the aim of 'home defence' (although in the event they were used overseas). It is symptomatic that today this institution for 'home defence' is the one institution which the present Government finds superfluous and possible to dispense with in the modern world strategy of British imperialism. The protest of all the field-marshals except Montgomery against this abandonment is not entirely proof of their backwardness; for it is characteristic of the nuclear mania of the modern world strategists of imperialism that they regard the home territory as expendable, and fail to recognise that also in the age of nuclear weapons more elementary forms of warfare may also develop and that the final test is always the test of people. Let us, however, turn from the more complex example of Britain, where even moments of genuine national defence, as in 1940, have always been shot through with imperialist calculations (the dispatch of the main armour and fighting strength in the summer of 1940, at the moment when invasion was stated to be feared, to Egypt, the theatre of the imperialist war, while leaving home defence to be equipped with ancient rifles and drilling with pikes). Let us turn to a clear and indisputable example of national defence in modern conditions—Vietnam.

Vietnam and Defence

The people of Vietnam are engaged in a war of national defence against a powerful and barbarous invader who has brought hundreds of thousands of troops and an armada of warships, bombing planes and engines of destruction across thousands of miles of ocean to invade and subjugate their country. But this very obvious war of aggression conducted by the United States is explained to the people of the United States as 'defence'. If the terrible enemy represented by the tiny and valiant and poverty-stricken nation of Vietnam is not overcome, it is explained, the invasion of the United States will logically follow (the 'domino' theory). When the United States occupies Chinese territory, besets the entire Chinese coast with the most formidable armed forces, refuses to recognise the Chinese People's Government and openly proclaims the aim to invade the mainland and overthrow the popular regime, it is explained that China is threatening the United States. When President Johnson asks Congress for another £4,643 million for the war in Vietnam, this is presented as additional 'defence' expenditure. Similarly when

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Britain dispatches scores of thousands of troops thousands of miles across the oceans and spends hundreds of millions of pounds to occupy territories in other continents and conduct military operations in those territories, this is also described as 'defence'. Here we have the imperialist meaning of 'defence', which is used to describe the opposite of national defence and to denote the invasion and occupation of other people's territories. This is in fact aggression, not defence. From this elementary confusion of two opposite conceptions under the single term 'defence' all the tears flow.

Hiding the Empire

In the palmy days of empire no such mythology was considered necessary. The glory of extending 'dominion over palm and pine' was considered self-evident. 'Wider still and wider shall thy bounds be set.' Paeans were sung to 'the empire on which the sun never sets'—not to 'our world-wide defence system on which the sun never sets'. But now the empire has been abolished. There remains the world string of bases. The objective continues the same—to protect the world area of dominion of British capital, whose overseas assets are now estimated at the highest total on record (£10-11,000 million). But the new system is both more costly and more troublesome. More costly: since overseas military expenditure never used to trouble the British budget or balance of payments in the old days; it could all be charged up to the Indian and colonial government's budgets, and Indian and colonial troops freely used in the most varied areas. Now all the troops have to be dispatched from Britain and is British manpower, with the exception of 14,000 Gurkhas still found very handy; and all the costs have to go on the British budget and balance of payments, even though the goodly slice taken from the overseas profits of the big monopolies helps to cover a portion of this. More troublesome: for the extending revolts of the peoples whose territories are occupied compel a ceaseless transfer of bases, with closing down of old ones and of their installations originally constructed at great expense, and the establishment of new ones, preferably now on remote islands regarded as immune from national liberation, with new installations requiring vast new expenditure. Contrary to the conception that this costly array of bases is merely a legacy from the past, soon approaching its close, the system continues with a tireless search for new bases. Aden may be visibly approaching its doom, although the war there is still actively continued. Singapore may be coming under a question mark, although 50,000 troops are still

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concentrated in the region. But Diego Garcia has now been earmarked in the Indian Ocean, with negotiations to buy it from Mauritius for £3 million and establish it as a new 'link in the defence communications network' and 'centre to control Indian Ocean air and naval movements and an alternative staging post for Britain in any "East of Suez" policy' (*Daily Telegraph*, November 8, 1965). More new expenditure on bases before the old account is closed.

'Binding Commitments'

Of course new language has to be found to describe the system, since the mere use of the alibi 'defence' is not sufficient to cover up something which is so obviously the opposite, even though for book-keeping purposes everything is duly entered up under the heading 'Defence Costs'. Harold Wilson, who has appropriated and almost made his own patent Kipling's 'East of Suez', just as Churchill appropriated and is still widely regarded as the coiner of Goebbels' 'Iron Curtain', has not quailed before this verbal task. Indignantly he has repudiated the charge that his 'East of Suez' strategy is imperialist:

> We have no nostalgic imperial dreams. But we have binding commitments to our Commonwealth partners and to our allies. We have committed ourselves to provide military support for United Nations peacekeeping if it is needed in this area or elsehwere.
>
> (Harold Wilson, interview to the *Sunday Mirror*, September 5, 1965)

Behold the new 'non-imperialist' formulas to cover overseas military bases and operations. First create some artificial state federation like 'Malaysia' or 'the South Arabian Federation'. Dig out some reactionary Sultan like the Tungku to be proclaimed as its Head under British military protection and occupation. Then draw up a Military Treaty with this Sultan. Thereafter the maintenance of the base, the military occupation and any military operations all become the honourable fulfilment of 'binding commitments to our Commonwealth partners and to our allies'. Similarly the United States sets up its Hitlerite puppet military dictator in Saigon, the succession of puppets following each other with bewildering speed as each proves even more discredited than the last. A suitable treaty is then signed with the puppet. Thereafter the war of aggression in Vietnam becomes the honourable fulfilment of a 'sacred obligation' to 'the Government of South Vietnam', to abandon whom would be a 'shameful betrayal'. Such is the 'new' technique of imperialism to cover the old familiar colonial wars and occupations. Not so new

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either; the practice has been customary throughout the history of imperialism. But it has taken a Labour Government to find in it a wonderful absolution from the charge of imperialism.

'International Peacekeeping'

Even more untenable is the attempt to invoke the United Nations as a camouflage cover for these operations. The facts reveal the opposite. It is correct that in the modern world no nation can separate its national defence from its international obligation to stand for and support the national independence and freedom from aggression of all other nations and play such part as it is able for the peace of the world. The Charter of the United Nations represented an attempt to embody this principle in a legal form compatible with the existence of sovereign states, and taking into account the realities of power residing in the hands of a few great powers whose will to co-operate could alone make possible the maintenance of peace. Ever since its foundation this Charter has been under ceaseless fire from the Western powers, who have found in its provisions requiring unanimity of the great powers in respect of any decision for military operations (the so-called 'veto') an inconvenient legal hindrance to their normal operations of colonial wars or aggression. Hence the Charter has been consistently flouted by them. China has for over sixteen years been illegally excluded. The Korean war was a flagrant violation of the Charter which required concurrence of the five permanent powers for any war conducted professedly in the name of the United Nations. To prevent further inconvenience of this nature an illegal resolution was put through the Assembly in defiance of the Charter to transfer decisions on war and peace to the Assembly, where until recent years the imperialist powers could count on a rubber stamp majority of client states. Now that this majority in the Assembly can no longer be counted on, owing to the accession of a number of newly independent states pursuing an independent policy, the demand has begun to be voiced to rescind this resolution and return to the Security Council. The Western regional military pacts, Nato, Cento and Seato, are all violations of the Charter, which expressly prohibits regional military pacts, except against threats of aggression by any combination including the former enemy powers (thus the Warsaw Pact is in accordance with the Charter).

Defying the United Nations

Hence the attempted United Nations plea is a boomerang. To

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describe these colonial wars of the United States or Britain, in Vietnam or Aden, the overseas military bases or sectional military pacts as 'United Nations peacekeeping' is to under-estimate the intelligence of United Nations supporters. The open defiance of the United Nations by all these operations is so glaring that the attempt to throw a sop to outraged left-wing and pacifist opinion by a pious reference to the United Nations could be no more convincing than would be an attempt to describe these colonialist operations as the fulfilment of the Sermon on the Mount. Consider Aden. On November 5 last year the United Nations Assembly carried a resolution by 90 votes to 11, calling on Britain to end the military operations and repression, and reaffirming the 1963 Assembly resolution which had called on Britain to close the base and withdraw. The eleven who voted against were Britain, the United States, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Holland, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Portugal and South Africa. After all the hocus pocus about the 'end of imperialism' the imperialist minority is revealed in all its naked isolation when it comes to the voting test.

Drop the Hocus Pocus

It is better to drop the hocus pocus, whether about the United Nations, or 'peace keeping operations' or 'filling a power-vacuum', or all the rest of the dreary jargon, and stick to the plain fact that the 'East of Suez' strategy is a straight imperialist strategy equally familiar in the old colonialist or current so-called 'neo-colonialist' (not so new as all that) technique. The objective is the same continuous objective—to protect and further the world interests of British finance-capital, whose central citadel is the City of London. What is new is that the cost of this strategy, which has always been injurious to Britain's home development and brought down Britain's former world industrial supremacy, is now visibly crippling Britain's economy and bringing into view menacing prospects. Hence this strategy has now begun to be questioned in quarters which are far from anti-imperialist.

Cost of the Overseas Bases

At the beginning of last year the House of Commons Estimates Committee complained that the real costs of the overseas military bases was being kept an official secret. As the Labour MP, William Hamilton, complained in parliament on January 19, 1965:

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> The Committee could reveal that according to a quartermaster in Benghazi the loss of a 2s. spanner involved the completion of 30 forms. But we cannot question the Minister as to why we are in Benghazi. . . .
>
> The Committee knew how many square feet were needed for the billiards room of a sergeants' mess . . . But the Committee under the present estimating system could not find out how much a particular base cost the taxpayer.
>
> (*Daily Telegraph*, January 20, 1965)

Following on this complaint the attempt was made for the first time to ascertain and publish from the Ministry of Defence the costs of all the overseas military bases and military occupation forces. On October 10, 1965, Mr. Healey gave the results in parliament. This showed a total estimated cost for 1965 of £585 million, of which the German occupation represented £180 million and the rest £405 million. The foreign exchange costs had been previously given by Mr. Healey in parliament on August 4 as £301 million (compared with £275 million for the official return of overseas military expenditure in 1964, the last Tory year).

Why the Deficit on the Balance of Payments in 1965?

The final net deficit on the balance of payments for 1965 has not yet been published at the time of writing, the initial returns available covering only the trading figures. The *Economist* of January 15 has estimated:

> The figures clearly imply a substantial reduction in Britain's deficit on current account for the year . . . to perhaps £175 million. But the continuing outflow of long-term capital probably still held the total basic deficit at close to £450 million.

If we take this provisional estimate (the final official return will no doubt be available by the time these lines are read), it will be noted that the net total deficit on the balance of payments for 1965 is estimated at about £450 million. In comparison with this the overseas military expenditure for 1965 has been officially given as £301 million, and the net outflow of long-term capital for 1965 was, according to the above estimate by the *Economist*, £275 million. Thus these two items alone, overseas military expenditure and long-term export of capital, account for a total deficit of £576 million for the year, or considerably more than the net deficit on the total balance of payments of £450 million. These two items alone, the expenditure abroad of the Government and the big monopolies, more than account for the deficit. Without this expenditure on these two items there would have been a surplus of £126 million. It is

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evident that the problem of the deficit is not primarily a problem of workers' wages or domestic consumption or even exports. The problem is a problem of the operations of finance-capital. It is true that the net inflow from so-called 'invisible' earnings, mainly representing the tribute income arising from overseas investments and the operations of finance-capital, must be taken into account in the final reckoning. But even so the outcome of the sum, in respect of overseas military expenditure, is beginning to be questioned also in some imperialist quarters.

Lesson of Singapore

After the secession of Singapore from 'Malaysia' last August had brought in question the whole future of that costly and ill-fated base, the *Financial Times* on August 10 commented:

> This raises the question of Singapore's base, and indeed of the whole string of bases that the United Kingdom maintains round the world at a foreign exchange cost of £300 million . . . Urgent consideration has been given to the transference, at huge cost, of the centre for Far Eastern operations to Western Australia or one of the Indian Ocean islands . . . But any such move would raise the fundamental question whether Britain should be exchanging Eastern bases or abandoning them . . .
>
> The unique string of bases that Britain has maintained from the Persian Gulf to the Far East is costing more than the balance of payments can possibly bear. Political upheavals are leading the military to spend more and more time defending the bases themselves. Political developments are now forcing the British to give up something that they cannot afford. Maybe it is an opportunity to grasp.

It will be seen that there is no question here of international morality, criticism of aggression or the right to occupy other people's countries with armed forces and hold them down by military superiority. No complaint was raised from these quarters against the system of bases so long as British imperialism was flourishing. It is only after the profit and loss account has begun to show a debit that the questioning from these quarters has begun. But this questioning from some imperialist quarters now reinforces the political currents represented by the principled criticism which has always been expressed by international socialists (not Labour imperialists) and opponents of imperialism.

Enoch Powell's Kite

A significant symptom of this trend in Tory circles was given by Enoch Powell's speech at the Tory Party Conference in October.

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Enoch Powell, who had already become recognised to have been the author of the widely discussed *Times* series of articles by 'A Conservative' which had derided the 'charade' of the Commonwealth and called for an end of it, delivered the platform speech on defence at the Conference, and included in this official address a section which was generally regarded as an onslaught on the Wilsonian 'East of Suez' strategy and the whole costly system of overseas bases. Discussing the use of 'military power' to hold in check the extension of communist influence in Asia and Africa he said:

> We should still have to measure the practical effect of British military effort against the size of the resources it demands and the consequences of diverting them from other pressing uses—defensive or economic.

Answering the argument of the alleged necessity of the bases and military operations to protect and promote British trading interests he said:

> Competitors of ours, who depend equally or more on trade, have outstripped our own performance without any military presence . . . Indeed a military presence has more than once proved rather an obstacle than a safeguard to the development of trade.

Naturally a storm arose later in Conservative party circles, and United States opinion expressed alarm at what was regarded as the emergence of a Gaullist trend in Britain. The *New York Times* London correspondent reported that the statement was regarded as 'a potential declaration of independence from American policy', and added that 'the highest figures in the Conservative party confirmed that his views were those of the party hierarchy and had been scrutinised before they were delivered'.

Crisis of Imperialist Strategy

It would be a mistake to regard this episode of Enoch Powell's apparent onslaught on Wilson's 'East of Suez' policy as equivalent to a break in the essentially bipartisan imperialist policy of Toryism and Right-Wing Labour. Sir Alec Douglas-Home, who acted in the conference as the de facto leader to come to the rescue of the titular leader and control the storms or smooth out the frictions, wound up the debate following Powell's speech by simultaneously proclaiming it 'the most brilliant analysis of the problems which face us in the future' and adding the cautionary note:

> If we do as a country have to modify our presence in any area we would not do so so as to create a vacuum of power in any area which would be filled by a greedy aggressor.

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Similarly Mr. Powell, after having been hauled over the coals in the parliamentary party for his hint of innovation, was careful to explain in a subsequent speech on November 4:

> It is not our commitments at this moment—whether for instance in South Arabia or in Borneo—which can be at issue. They exist and must be met.

Back to Square One. The fact is that, despite the evident increasing signs of restlessness, neither Toryism nor Right-Wing Labour has yet found a way out of the rut in which the present policy of British imperialism is bogged, or has even advanced to the partially independent role of Gaullism. What is significant in the present controversies is the manifest increasing crisis of the whole of imperialist strategy in the present world situation. This is not only in respect of Britain, where the economic impact of the present strategic burdens and subservience to the United States is most sharply felt. It is also evident in the crisis of Nato; the role of De Gaulle and new trends in European relations; the conflict of policies represented by Adenauer and Erhard in West Germany; the deadlock so far over the planned 'multilateral nuclear force' or 'Atlantic nuclear force'; the contradictions between the United States and its European 'partners', and the enlarging dilemma and desperate recklessness of the United States war policy in South East Asia.

Crisis of Nato

In 1969 Nato, with the completion of its twenty years span, is due to come up for renewal. But its obsolescence is already universally recognised. Long vanished and forgotten is the grandiose Lisbon plan for 92 divisions. France is halfway to non-participation; the British and American divisions are grudged. The reality of the vast and complex military structure becomes more and more obviously the resurgence of German militarism with the West German army the strongest in Western Europe. The living controversy in the mouldering framework is the demand of the West German militarists for participation in 'control' of nuclear weapons. The original theory on the basis of which Nato was set up was the supposed menace of Soviet hordes sweeping over Western Europe. That theory, which was always a myth, has long been abandoned by all spokesmen of every political colour. The myth served initially as the cover for American penetration and domination in Western Europe. With its further development it served as the cover for the rebuilding of German militarism, the open reversal of alliances,

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the repudiation of wartime pledges and attempts to undo the outcome of the victory over fascism. Today the menace in Europe visibly arises from the West German expansionist aims, encouraged by the powerful aggressive forces in the United States. But the actual wars and military operations of the Western powers (Korea, Suez, Malaya, Vietnam and the rest) have all been outside Europe. Hence two trends have arisen in the Western imperialist camp with regard to Nato. One, to treat Nato as irrelevant and obsolete in relation to the real issues in Asia and Africa. The other, to demand the re-organisation of Nato so as to extend it to cover all the aims of imperialism in Asia and Africa, and merge into it the nominally regional imperialist military systems such as Cento, Seato and Anzus. The latter is the present British official policy. The United States is also exercising pressure to increase West European and British participation in its military operations in Eastern Asia.

Imperialism and China

With the fading of the spectre of the 'Russian menace' as the cover for Western imperialist military plans and operations, the attempt is being made to replace it by a similar spectre of the 'Chinese menace'. Once again the same old stories are being trotted out that 'Chinese hordes' are preparing to overrun the world, and that all must combine to withstand the new 'Yellow peril'. This is a campaign as false as the old and as essential to defeat. It is true that in the present internal controversy within the international communist movement various formulations have been put forward by Chinese communist leaders, including on questions of war and peace; denunciations of the Soviet Union as betraying socialism, overrun with capitalism and allied with imperialism; and calls to the membership of Communist Parties to form breakaway parties and encouragement of such breakaways; all which statements and actions the majority of communists all over the world have reason very strongly to criticise and oppose. We are not at the moment dealing with these very grave controversies here, since these are in essence internal controversies of the international communist movement, although also impinging on the sphere of state relations. But the very active attempts of imperialism to utilise these controversies will fail. These controversies can never be allowed to diminish for one moment the indispensable united support of all communists, socialists and progressive people for China and the Chinese People's

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Revolution against every offensive of imperialism. China is a great socialist country, and the land of the second greatest socialist revolution; and, whatever criticisms there may be of some of the abstract generalised formulations of its present leadership on world affairs, its practical foreign policy for peace, in face of the limitless provocation and aggression of United States imperialism, has been continuously marked by signal patience, moderation and caution. It is U.S. imperialism which has continuously been and remains the aggressor against China. The guilt of imperialism bears the main responsibility for the present difficulties. In proportion as the united stand of the peoples defeats this offensive of imperialism, and wins recognition for China's rightful place in international affairs, this will not only be a victory for peace, but also a powerful factor for helping to resolve the present difficulties in the path of the united advance of the peoples of the world.

Vietnam the Crux

This crisis of United States imperialist strategy, and of all Western imperialist strategy, reaches today its sharpest point in Vietnam. President Johnson and the generals of the Pentagon vehemently protest that they are 'sincere' in their calls for peace and a cease-fire and negotiation over Vietnam. They are indignant that these peace moves should be treated as a preliminary smokescreen for the extreme escalation of the war which they simultaneously threaten. Certainly they are sincere in desiring peace—provided they remain in possession; providing the Vietnam people submit; providing their openly Hitlerite puppet dictator is recognised as 'the Government of South Vietnam'; providing, in other words, they can obtain the fruits of war without having to pursue further a long and costly war which they can find less and less prospect of winning. They are ready to send peace missions to every capital in the world—except to meet the people whom they are actually fighting, the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam. The burglar would also desire peace from the householder if he could be left in possession of his loot. Hitler also sincerely desired peace in the occupied countries of his New Order in Europe, provided the national resistance movements, which he similarly described as communist conspiracies, would cease to attack his puppets and invading troops. But if they refused to submit he had no answer save ever more violent escalation of terror. That is the postion of the United States in Vietnam today.

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Moment of Decision

The American invaders of Vietnam have advanced from 16,000 'advisers' to 200,000 invading troops today, with every weapon of terror and destruction. They threaten 500,000 tomorrow. They threaten to reduce North Vietnam to 'the Stone Age'. They threaten all South East Asia. They threaten China. They brandish their nuclear weapons. But what if the people do not submit to their threats? The gangster believes that if only he can increase ('escalate') his terror and threats of terror, his victim will submit. But a nation does not submit. The Vietnam people have an older civilisation than the American, and a proud tradition of long and ultimately victorious resistance to every invader. The American invaders have every resource of wealth and power and science and technology. But they lack one thing which all their wealth and power and science and technology cannot give them: the key to the hearts of the Vietnam people. Vietnam belongs to the people of Vietnam. Gradually the truth of this is beginning to confront the once so confident American strategists with the spectre of the bankruptcy of all their strategy, just as happened to the French invaders before them. The moment is dangerous; for the gangsters are now reckless with desperation. But the madness of this course is coming to be recognised even by some of the cooler heads among the ruling circles in the United States, as reflected by some of their best known political columnists, as well as by the popular mass movement of resistance to the war, and by world opinion of the peoples and many of the political leaders in all countries. Now above all, therefore, is the time to respond to this moment of simultaneous danger and also visibly deepening crisis of the whole imperialist strategy of aggression, and unite the popular demand and campaign and active support in every country for the liberation struggle of the Vietnam people for peace on the elementary basis which every reasonable man can recognise, expressed in the four points of the Liberation Front and by President Ho in his letter to the Pope (reprinted on p. 93), that the aggressor should stop his aggression and the people of Vietnam live in independence and peace.

Britain's Testing Time

Nowhere is this campaign more important than in Britain. Britain's support of the war in Vietnam is the main basis of international support of the American aggression. To change the policy of support of the war in Vietnam means to change the whole present reactionary

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trend of policy in Britain. For the support of the American war in Vietnam is the price paid to buy American support of Britain's 'East of Suez' policy and military operations in Southern Arabia or Malaysia. It is part of the price paid for the colossal deadweight of loans of many hundreds of millions of pounds from the American and American-controlled moneylenders to help to save the pound from being swamped by the cost of Britain's imperialist adventures, and in practice serving to ensure new and still heavier economic liabilities for Britain in the succeeding years. To change this disastrous course is indispensable for Britain's future. Government Ministers have too long been allowed to get away with solemnly lecturing the workers for their extravagant demands in consumption or inadequacy of production and with uttering sanctimonious moral exhortations for sacrifices to meet the nation's desperate economic situation. It is time for the workers to begin lecturing Government Ministers for their imperialist extravagance and squandering of the nation's productive output on 'East of Suez' adventures which bears the main responsibility for the current economic difficulties. The fight for a change in this sphere, expressed most sharply at this moment in the question of the war in Vietnam and the coming 'Defence' White Paper, as it will be in the coming budget, is the essential counterpart of the fight against the economic offensive at home and for the advances which are justly demanded by the people.

R.P.D.

FAIRFIELD AND THE FUTURE OF SHIPBUILDING

Finlay Hart

A SHIPYARD with an order book of £31 million, that launched three ships totalling 55,000 tons in 1965, had its affairs put into the hands of a receiver in October. The Government, under pressure, within a matter of days granted £1 million credit to keep the yard open. Within a few weeks the Government had decided to become a 50-50 shareholder in the yard with a group of financiers not previously directly connected with shipbuilding.

The chairman of the new company believes he has a pledge from the workers in the yard that 'from now on Fairfield would not be fettered by national, district or local agreements'. Addressing a mass

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meeting of the workers, Mr. George Brown, Minister for Economic Affairs said: 'From here on Fairfield is a commercial shipyard to be run in a commercial fashion. It is not a special case, it is not a political case. It is just a very good commercial shipyard and I hope it will be looked upon in that way.'

All this happened within the short space of two months. In the words of a shop steward who had lived through the hectic period: 'All this is enough to make the Clyde dry up in astonishment.' The Fairfield crisis reflects what could happen throughout the shipbuilding industry in Britain. Press reports deal with financial losses on shipbuilding contracts in Harland & Wolff, Belfast; Cammell Laird's on the Mersey; and Swan Hunter & Hawthorn Leslie on the Tyne. Sir William Lithgow, head of the Lithgow group, the owners of the Fairfield shipyard until taken over by the new set-up, is converted to the idea that the solution to our shipbuilding problems is State subsidy. The important and interesting thing to note about the activities associated with the Fairfield shipyard is that decisions have been taken to keep the yard open as 'a very good commercial shipyard' with work for two or three years and with the prospect of four, five or even more years. It must be causing the shipbuilding employers a great deal of worry, as the changes took place while everyone in the industry, the trade unions and the employers were awaiting the findings of the Geddes Committee, whose report is expected at the end of March.

The terms of reference of the Geddes Committee, set up by the President of the Board of Trade on February 2, 1965, are:

(a) to establish what changes are necessary in organisation, in the methods of production, and any other factors affecting costs to make the shipbuilding industry competitive in the world markets;
(b) to establish what changes in organisation and methods of production would reduce costs of manufacture of large main engines of ships to the lowest level; and
(c) to recommend what action should be taken by employers, trade unions and Government to bring about these changes.

Without being too cynical about the report and its recommendations when they are published, so long as the industry is in the hands of private enterprise, there will require to be the kind of pressure used by the Fairfield workers to make the Government take over the whole industry in the interests of this country.

What is happening in the industry has to be taken into account alongside world shipbuilding. Japan has again broken all previous records for ships launched by any one country. Its total of 5,500,000

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tons of ships launched in 1965 exceeds the combined totals of Sweden, Britain and West Germany. Britain was third last year in the launching table with a total of 1,191,000 tons: 70,000 tons better than the previous year. It is expected that 1966 will be even better for the British yards, but there is growing concern about the future.

First, there is the colossal world output of 12 million tons launched in 1965. This cannot be kept up unless there is a tremendous expansion of the world's merchant fleet. The world fleet is around 140 million tons at present. Estimating the life of a ship as short as 20 years it means the world needs 7 million tons of new ships each year. So every maritime country is taking steps to protect its own shipbuilding industry and be competitive for those ships on the market.

Our shipbuilders, the Swedes, the Germans, the Dutch and other West European shipbuilders are worried about the price levels for large ships which are being established throughout the shipping world by the Japanese. One shipbuilder stated recently: 'However efficient we may or may not be, the Japanese level of prices for this type of business is something we just have not got a hope of looking at'. Real wages in Japan are not inferior to those paid in Western countries. The Japanese builders assisted by their Government have made immense efforts to improve and modernise their equipment. With careful pre-planning and control they can build and deliver very large tankers in as short a period as six or seven months. To bring the British yard that built the Queen Mary 30 years ago and the Queen Elizabeth 25 years ago up to the standard of the Nagasaki yard, equipped to build the largest tankers, will cost £25 million.

British shipbuilding is handicapped by having an industry that was developed in the early part of the last century. The yards are restricted by main roads and railways and in spite of all that has been spent on them in the post-war years, very few if any match up to the modern yards of Japan, Sweden and West Germany. In spite of all the glib talk among certain shipbuilders and the press, it has to be recognised that the industry can no longer be effective with the present set-up. Each yard in Britain stands on its own although there has been a growth of monopoly within the industry. Even though Fairfield was part of the Lithgow Group it was allowed to go to the wall, and the same fate may await some other yards within a combine unless the Government steps in.

There is very little co-operation or co-ordination between yards. Each competes with the other for orders, materials and labour. There is considerable time and effort spent by separate yards estimat-

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ing for the same contract. It would be interesting to know how much it cost for all the competing consortiums and yards to estimate for the Cunarder that eventually went to John Brown, Clydebank.

Shipbuilding is an assembly industry. Quick erection depends on the parts being available at the right place at the right time. Engines, electrical gear, winches are all made outside the building berths and are generally available when the hull is constructed. The main problem facing the shipbuilders is the construction of the hull of a ship and generations of planners have tried to assemble keel, shell, bulkheads and decks with the same proficiency as assembling a car or a sewing machine. The jobs were divided up so that there was as much repetitive work as possible but it appears the whole system has broken down. Instead of one man one job the aim of the employers is to break up the restrictive practices they imposed.

In 1934 all the trade unions catering for shipbuilding opposed the demand that all welding should be done exclusively by ship welders. Ted Hill, then General Secretary of the Boilermakers, stated that what was wanted was a shipbuilding apprenticeship where a lad would learn all branches of hull construction and move from one job to another as required. He argued it was unfair to condemn any man to work at a single operation all his life. The employers insisted and set up a new trade. Every employer in the industry is now concentrating on achieving flexibility between trades and tend to see this as the solution to many of the problems in the industry. Wages and salaries account for 1/5th of the total cost of a ship's hull. Supposing that complete flexibility is achieved, it could only mean the saving of 4 per cent and will not save the industry.

The workers in the industry and their trade unions cannot stand aside and wait for the publication of the Geddes Report. The workers in Fairfield succeeded in keeping their yard open. If the viewpoint of the employers' spokesmen is anything to go by they are quite convinced that more yards will close. The answer must be, no closures. Ships of all sizes are needed to carry the trade of this country, around our own shores, to the awakening millions in the new developing countries, the socialist countries with their rapidly growing needs and to all countries who will trade. Britain has the largest active merchant fleet in the world. The workers in the shipbuilding industry must insist that the Government will only grant permission for British merchant ships to be built abroad in very exceptional circumstances. To keep the ships up to date the shipbuilding industry must supply 1,200,000 tons of new ships a year.

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With an efficient industry, generous credits and an end to the cold war we shall get our share of the ships needed by other nations too.

The Government stopped short at taking over Fairfield's yard. The logic of the recent events is that the shipbuilding industry, if it is to meet the needs of the nation, can no longer be left in the hands of private enterprise. Every development that the Geddes Committee may propose, every improvement aimed at bringing our industry up to the standards of other maritime countries will need financial assistance from the Government. The workers in the industry have the prime responsibility to insist that the Government nationalises shipbuilding. It will be easier to argue for the full development and use of shipyard labour within a nationalised industry, but it will be very difficult to get agreement if it only leads to unemployment for the workers and higher profits for the employers.

AEROSPACE METAPHYSICIANS

Alan Spence

(With the appointment of Mrs. Barbara Castle as Minister of Transport, public attention is drawn to the problems of road and rail traffic, but it also needs to be drawn to the development of the aircraft industry, upon which the past government's policies had a disastrous effect. We are, therefore, pleased to print the following article by an aircraft worker, who, prior to being made redundant during the TSR2 cancellation, was Chairman of the Preston Joint Shop Stewards Committee, Secretary of the BAC Combine Committee and a delegate to the National Advisory Committee of the AEU.—Ed., LM.)

FAILURE is the destiny of the Plowden report on the aircraft industry. The greater the effort to implement such febrile recommendations as do emerge, the steeper will become the decline of the aircraft industry. As the last chapter of the report becomes fact, that fact will become a register of the demise of the world's third largest creative aerospace construction unit.

Adopting the philosophical approach of the metaphysicians who see everything in isolation, the Plowden Committee produced an arbitrary collection of data which lacks connection with an evolving environment and its corresponding changing technology. Dominated by the appearance of the present aircraft industry, they fail to grasp its historical essence, and this failure delivers the heritage of

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British aerospace technology into the hands of its enemies.

Geared to the Nato war-machine the British taxpayer spends £80 million annually on maintaining its troops in Germany. With this annual tithe the West Germans have bought up British designed and built engines, knowledge and technicians and fashioned it into a prototype vertical take-off transport aircraft. Its feasibility assured, in stepped the U.S. and, on the strength of their already large scale share-holding in the German aircraft industry, concluded an agreement on its further development and excluded the British.

Four years ago the Royal Aircraft Establishment produced a plan for a communications satellite system for the GPO—all within the capacity of Britain's industry and using British rockets in its later stages—costing £200 million spread over five years. By now it would be in its final stages of completion and ready to begin producing a stream of revenue from abroad. But dominated by 'East of Suez' expenditure, the plan lies mouldering as a might-have-been and the U.S.A. dictates its terms for its monopoly control of Early Bird; and France launches its first satellite.

That other product of British genius, the air-cushion vehicle, wins increasing favour abroad, and depends upon a Swedish company to grasp and exploit its potential as a large scale passenger carrier and order its construction for use on Channel crossings, whilst the U.S.A. forges ahead with a prototype development for a 5,000 ton ocean-going cargo craft that will travel at 60 mph.

The list of missed opportunities runs to reams: the Belfast, that giant which could have been in use already carrying 300 passengers at cheaper than train fares between London and Glasgow; the failure to pursue the promising helicopter programme of the Westminster and Rotodyne and now compelled to buy U.S.; the parsimonious financing of the lamina-flow aircraft of Handley Page which, like the swing-wing aircraft, is now being taken up and developed by the U.S.A. the attempt by the chairman of BOAC to scrap the V.C.10 and the ineptness of a government which did not insist on Guthrye selling the BOAC Boeings and re-equipping with this best passenger selling aircraft in the West.

The whole of Britain's transport system presents a picture of chaos. The railways lie gasping as more and more freight is transferred to the roads. The roads system represents nothing better than a gigantic herd of wild animals trapped in a stockade from which there is no release but which, forever mill and dart about the side streets in a vain hope of escape. BEA and BOAC, with pockets

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constantly filched by the inane competition deliberately created to satisfy the lunatic fringe of British capitalism, trundle about with a load of debt repayments that are enough to sink a battleship and maintain prices that could stand, large reductions if internal competition was eliminated and external pooling systems altered.

Britain spends the colossal sum of £4,000 million on its transportation (a seventh of our national income) and this sum increases by an average of 8 per cent annually. With each passing year, the road network becomes even more choked and incapable of fulfilling its function, and the iron logic of stark necessity grinds in with inexorable power the inescapable end to a system which puts an extra 7 per cent of vehicles on the road each year but increases those same roads by a minute .02 per cent annually. The result can only be a thrombosis that will not only bring road transport to a grinding halt but will backlash onto the sources of production with such an almighty whip that the entire nation will feel its smart.

Apart from this direct expenditure on British transport is the indirect cost. It is estimated that the present traffic jams and holdups cost an annual £2,000 million on the nation's transport bill. It is quite apparent on the meagre evidence shown—even if our daily life did not confirm it—that our transport system requires immediate and far reaching changes if we are to escape national dislocation. Yet no hint of this approaching storm emerges from the Plowden report but, however blind the committee—what excuse can the Labour government submit for their failure to measure up to the crisis? When Jenkins, as Minister of Aviation, issued the terms of reference to the committee, he did not even state a requirement for it to examine its role in internal transport! Could blindness be ever more stygian? When I met the then Minister and Mr. Stonehouse, as spokesman for the delegation which arose out of the mass lobby of aircraft workers in January 1965, it became increasingly evident during the discussion that the case for a comprehensive and integrated transport system developing an aircraft programme along some of the lines outlined, just was not registering.

And yet it should have done, for the Labour Party election manifesto stated: 'Labour will draw up a national plan for transport covering the national network of roads, rail, and canal communications; properly co-ordinated with air, coastal shipping and port services.' The Queen's first speech of the fifth Labour Government included a promise for a progressive transport policy.

Because Jenkins did not give the lead, and the Plowden committee

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lacked the insight, they groped for co-operation with Europe as the panacea. Failing to see that the Continental manufacturers are becoming increasingly dominated by U.S. monopolies, they do not see that once in, then the tentacles of the dollar octopus will squeeze all that is of use out of the industry and throw its husk on to the scrap heap; that cut-backs in production will be done at the expense of de-industrialising the advanced technologies to protect the metropolitan centre and turn the manufacturing side into a colonial appendage of U.S. imperialism. For imperialism is far from dead, it has simply to turn its major drive on to the advanced industrial countries.

To the U.S. the British aircraft industry is the largest obstacle in their path to clearing the Western world for their aircraft products, thus making more favourable the ground for competing with the Soviet Union, which is fast emerging with a range of aircraft that exceed in variety, quality and credit facilities the U.S. industries, at a price which reflect the superiority of a socialist system of society.

The paramount needs of the overwhelming majority of the country should be the dominant trait in the Labour Government's activities. This trait can only be established and the transport problem solved on the basis of a plan drawn up in accordance with the election manifesto.

Receiving £1,000 million a year from the population in the shape of oil, petrol, purchase and road tax, the government has the finance to solve the problem. If this means the government having to forego its £1,000 million purchase of U.S. warplanes, so much the better for Britain's aerospace industry. The necessary data and information is, in the main, available and the sooner Barbara Castle, the new Minister of Transport, gets the GPO, Ministry of Aviation, and the Ministry of Science & Technology into a body whose terms of reference will be the introduction of an integrated transport system, then the sooner we shall be able to offer the people of this country a transport system which will be adequate, cheap, safe and thus able to enrich the lives of British people.

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AN UNPUBLISHED LETTER TO THE ECONOMIST

(*At the beginning of December* The Economist *published an article on Soviet production in industry and agriculture, by 'an academic correspondent'. It contained such a remarkable collection of current myths about the Soviet economy that it seemed to call for a point-by-point reply. One was sent by Andrew Rothstein. Unfortunately the journal could only find room for 200-250 words, which would have turned the reply into a mere comment on one or two points. For the reasons mentioned, therefore, it is printed below.—Ed., LM.*)

The article entitled 'Was Stalin Right?' in your issue of December 4 takes some astonishing liberties with the facts about the USSR.

It declares the harvests of 1963 and 1965 'disastrous'. In fact, the poor grain harvest of 1963—though the worst since 1956—was higher than in any year before then, and far higher (107.5 million tons) than in 1913, the record year of Tsarist days (86 million tons in the same area), which no one ever proclaimed 'disastrous'.* As for 1965, the total harvest was stated by Mr. Polyansky on November 6 to be only '2-3 per cent lower than in 1964', the highest ever recorded.

The article says that 'some 50 million people' are 'tied up in farming'. In fact, the number of persons engaged in agriculture in 1963 was 27.3 million—or, reckoning part-time work on household plots by members of their families, the equivalent of 31 million. Whatever comparisons may be made with other countries, the fact remains that this is less than half the numbers engaged in agriculture in Tsarist days, while they are producing over double the quantity of products (reckoning not only grain but the other output of farming)—and have barely 40 per cent more to feed.

The article speaks of an 'admission that pockets of unemployment exist'. There has been no such 'admission'—only distorted versions in western newspapers of articles discussing the possibility of drawing available labour from less productive into more productive employment. There is a great difference between people who get their living in occupations which do not fully utilise their capacities, and those without gainful employment, or hope of any.

The article speaks of 'emotional bias towards heavy industry' among Marxists in the USSR. The lack of heavy industry left Tsarist Russia virtually disarmed after twelve months of the first world war: the building of heavy industry enabled the Soviet Union to begin equipping its light industry and agriculture with modern

*On the contrary, *The Economist* of those days praised the harvest of 1913 as 'good', and 'a satisfactory year'.

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machinery and opening up its vast natural resources, between 1930 and 1940, and to outbuild Nazi Germany in war material during the second world war. That is not emotion but economics.

The writer characterises as 'failure' what he calls 'a distinct slowing down in Soviet industrial growth' since the late 1950s. He is less than ingenuous with your readers. He says nothing about how this corresponds with plans. It is just since the late 1950s—the period of the seven year plan (1959-1965)—that the total volume of industrial output has grown by 84 per cent instead of the planned 80 per cent. Up to 1962 inclusive, the annual increase was never less than 9 per cent: in 1963 it was 8.5 per cent, in 1964 7.1. per cent and this year 8.5 per cent again. Not much of a slowing-down, and hardly a 'failure'. For 1966 it is *planned* at 6.7 per cent. How long is it since the USA has had such rates of growth?

The writer says that 'the tiny individual plots still produce today —*30 years after Stalin's collectivisation—almost half the milk the* Russians drink and almost half the meat they eat'—as though collectivisation was intended to squeeze out production on the household plots; whereas its success depended, among other things, on their maintenance by those who, up till then, had been individual peasant producers. What he forgot to say was that he was speaking of *half* the Russians—48 per cent, those who do the farming and their families—and that it is they who consume most of the milk and meat output of the 16 million tiny plots. The other 52 per cent of the people consume mainly the milk and meat produced in the socially-owned economy of the State and collective farms—4.8 million tons of meat out of a national total of 8.2 million tons (58 per cent) and 36.5 million tons of milk out of 63.1 million tons (nearly 58 per cent). Your writer seems to imagine that collective farming was introduced to justify a theory, not to provide an effective reply to the shortages created by petty capitalism sprouting in the countryside.

'The failure of the State and collective farms to achieve this (the raising of farm productivity from its present low levels) is Communism's biggest disappointment', says the writer. No one will dispute that Soviet Communists are anxious about the need to raise agricultural production, and are doing their best to bring it about. But they are not quite so disappointed as the writer would have your readers think. Yield per hectare of grain, in comparison with 1913, was 37 per cent more in 1964: yield of sugarbeet was 16 per cent more, potatoes 43 per cent more and raw cotton 99 per cent

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THE SPANISH GENERAL

THIRTY years ago this month a General Election was held in Spain. The People's Front, based on a bloc between workers, town middle class and a large section of the peasantry, increased the representation of the parties it comprised—from Republicans to Communists—from 121 in the old parliament to 268 in the new. It was a victory for the united front, forged in the tremendous struggles from 1933 onwards.

During the years 1933-36, industrial wages fell from an average of 10 or 12 pesetas daily to an average of 4 to 5, and agricultural wages even lower. Tens of thousands of peasants who could not prove a title to their land before 1931 (i.e. under the Monarchy) were driven off it—there were 20,000 evictions in the province of Guipuzcoa alone. Hundreds of active trade unionists and poor farmers were jailed—the drive to Fascism was on apace. But the development of the revolution was now also gathering speed, as this account by R. Page Arnot in *Labour Monthly*, November 1934, shows:

> On the 8th September . . . an anti-Fascist General Strike both in Madrid and in the Asturias: which strike was on such a scale and of such militancy as to make the Fascists give ground. On the 13th September the Communist Party of Spain and the Spanish Socialist Party engaged in a united front . . . on the following day 90,000 young socialists and young communists assembled in a United Front meeting in the Madrid Stadium . . . Thursday, 4th October, Lerroux announced that the Fascists had been taken into his new Cabinet: the tocsin had sounded: and on the same evening the General Strike began. In Madrid, Barcelona, the Asturias and other parts of the North generally, response was immediate and complete . . . In the Asturias the general strike passed immediately into an armed uprising.

The savageries of the Foreign Legion during that rising, when neither the women nor the children of the Asturian miners were spared torture and death in their most horrible forms, were followed in 1935 with the continual assassination of trade union officials, peasants' organisers, active Republicans.

But 1935 was also a year of reorganisation and rejuvenation for the forces of the working class and of democracy. In a series of gigantic demonstrations, attaining 400,000 in Madrid, the People's Front was born. The central point of its platform was that for which the Communists had been fighting—the dissolution of parliament and a democratic General Election.

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ECTION, FEBRUARY, 1936

The Spanish People March, by Helios Gomez

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more.* However these results could be improved upon, collective farmers and State farm workers are hardly likely to be impelled by such results into calling upon 'the class of aristocratic landowners to marshal the farm labour force more efficiently'. Whoever else stood for efficiency —of a kind—in Tsarist Russia, it was least of all the aristocratic landowners.

Your writer speaks of 'the human and organisational weaknesses of a still largely uneducated peasantry'. He thus dismisses at one lordly sweep the fact that they are literate today, compared with nearly 100 per cent illiteracy among the peasants in the happy days of the 'aristocratic landowners'. He ignores the 35 per cent of places in school secondary classes (16-18) which fall in the rural areas—for whose children?—the 110,000 clubs and reading rooms run by village Soviets and collective farms—for whom?—and the many millions of copies of newspapers which circulate among these 'uneducated' peasants. Still more astounding, he ignores the fact that the 38,000 collective farms with their crop area exceeding 250,000,000 acres—a form of co-operative agricultural organisation without precedent on anything remotely approaching such a scale —are run by many hundreds of thousands of practical men and women, peasants almost all of them, who have gained vast experience over these thirty years; not to speak of the huge network of consumer co-operative societies which manage the village shops.

Can he really suppose that he or anyone else could persuade the Soviet people (or their Communist leaders, if he prefers), with these results of by no means 'fruitless effort' behind them, to adopt his suggestion that they should 'curtail drastically' the proposed investments in agriculture, divert them instead to industry, and pay the price by 'putting up with grain imports . . . of necessity from hard currency areas of the world'? In plain language, this would mean that the Soviet Union should put itself into utter dependence for its agricultural supplies on the tender mercies of the United States, Canada and Australia—as British Governments since the war have done for sterling. The example is not likely to be an alluring one. It would indeed, as he says, 'put some restraint on Soviet foreign policy', and would be a 'major change' in more than the pattern of world trade.

Your writer is knocking at the wrong door.

Yours faithfully,

Andrew Rothstein

*Moreover, if state and collective farming is to be judged by grain output, what about output of vegetables, livestock, cotton and other industrial crops—which in 1965 reached record heights? Are the farms producing these, private?

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THE ANGLO-IRISH TRADE AGREEMENT

C. Desmond Greaves

IT has not escaped wry comment that Mr. Sean Lemass, Premier of the Irish Republic, should sign an agreement to establish a Free Trade area with Britain while simultaneously preparing a most elaborate commemoration of the heroic insurrection of Easter 1916. Presumably he comes to bury Connolly not to praise him. But Connolly's warnings against the cupboard-patriotism of the propertied classes are likely to survive even Mr. Lemass's reputation, now inflated by a great betrayal masquerading as a brilliant business deal. In the Irish Parliament on January 7, the Government won the vote, only the 22 Labour deputies dissenting. We are back to the days before the national bourgeoisie took its last nibble at the apple of revolution.

The historical volte-face is remarkable. Over the last two centuries the question of fiscal relations with Britain has played a part in Irish affairs second only to that of the land. The eighteenth century cry of 'free trade or else' was not a demand for fiscal union with Britain, but for Ireland's right to regulate her own trade with the whole world. More recently three successive Home Rule Bills were shipwrecked on the Tariff question. In 1917 the national bourgeoisie, which with the sniff of war orders in its nostrils, had turned up its nose at the petty-bourgeois revolutionaries of 1916, transferred its allegiance to the 'small fry' of Sinn Fein precisely because they were fighting for fiscal independence which Redmond had abandoned. From that time onwards the political representatives of the national bourgeoisie were no longer big-bourgeois or bourgeoisiefied landlords, but men who had 'riz'. One section of these, led by Arthur Griffith, abandoned the revolution, disestablished the Republic and plunged the country into civil war, once Lloyd George had made his famous concession on tariffs. Every local and national newspaper in Ireland, save one, lauded them to the skies. The 'national demand' had been achieved.

Fianna Fail, of which Mr. Lemass is leader, stems not from Arthur Griffith's party of capitulation but from the dissident revolutionaries who fought the civil war. His party attained its present domination in the world economic crisis of the 'thirties. It is as if every time the workers and farmers challenge neo-colonialist institutions, a section

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of the petty-bourgeoisie provides big business with a new green cloak. But as the merchant and landlord interests penetrated Sinn Fein and halted the revolution in 1921, so of late years British and pro-British interests in Ireland have tended to make overtures not so much to the traditional party of imperialism, Fine Gael, but in Fianna Fail. Apart from the state industries, all very big capital to Ireland today is either British or mixed. It is only one stage from taking over the capital to taking over the party.

The process by which the change came about is revealed in the balance of payments, which has had the same basic form for the past two decades:

Official estimate of the balance of international payments with different monetary areas in the year 1963

Category	Gt. Britain & the Six Counties	Total Sterling Area	Other Countries	Total all Countries
Current Receipts. £ million				
Merchandise exports and re-exports f.o.b.	139.7	145.2	40.6	185.8
Emigrants' remittance and legacies	5.7	5.7	7.4	13.1
Receipts in respect of tourism and travel	41.2	41.2	8.3	49.5
Income from capital ..	33.3	33.8	0.8	34.6
Other receipts	22.8	22.8	13.6	36.4
Total receipts	242.7	248.7	70.7	319.4
Current Expenditure				
Merchandise imports, f.o.b. plus insurance and freights	163.4	182.2	114.1	296.3
Emigrants' remittances and legacies			0.4	0.4
Payments in respect of tourism and travel	18.6	18.6	3.8	22.4
Outgo from capital	17.7	17.7	1.1	18.8
Other expenditure	2.8	2.8	0.8	3.6
Total expenditure	202.5	221.3	120.2	341.5
Deficit (–) or excess of current transactions	40.2	27.4	–49.5	–22.1
Capital movements	21.3	21.6	0.5	22.1

In the last analysis this form is dictated by imperial decision. The enforced partition of the country determines that the cross-border

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trade is but a tenth of that of either part with other countries. The industrial north is importing food from abroad; the agricultural south is bringing in British machinery. The short answer to those who say that the economies of the two parts of Ireland are no longer exactly complementary is 'No, imperialism willed otherwise.' And the necessity to send out cattle to buy machinery from Britain has hung like chains about the body of the Republic.

Under these conditions the only way to wipe out the large trade deficit by developing the resources of the country was to extend rapidly the state sector of the economy. This policy died during the anti-communist scares of the 'forties and 'fifties. Instead, reliance was placed on invisible exports, tourism, pensions, emigrants' remittances and income from capital. The remaining deficit on current accounts was met by a vast capital influx. First, the provisions against foreigners having majority holdings in Irish companies went by the board. Later, even the purchase of land was virtually freed and all manner of inducements offered to foreign investors. But the tally is still too small. It can be estimated that the annual capital influx is really above £30 million, of which about £10 million is then exported by purchase of British imperial securities bearing high rates of interest. Three quarters of the Irish Republic's exports go to Britain. Every line in the balance of payments estimates tells the story of increasing dependence, illustrating the peculiar form of motion of neo-colonialism.

The essence of the Trade Agreement is that in return for concessions of agricultural exports worth, it is claimed, about ten million in prices and subsidies, the Republic has agreed to a phased reduction in tariffs on British industrial goods. Complete free trade is to be established by 1975, the Irish being allowed to exempt only 3 per cent of their imports. The Lemass Government, preferring an alternative line of retreat, had applied for membership of EEC in hopes of diversifying foreign trade, and securing unlimited cattle exports to the continent. The British negotiators took care of this. They stipulated that Ireland should deliver every year 638,000 head of cattle worth £90 million.

The British advantage is out of all proportion to this. It is not usually appreciated that Ireland as a whole is Britain's second largest export market, falling very little below the USA. At present, however, the Republic spends only half of her £320 million import bill on British goods. If the proportion could be restored to the 75 per cent at which it stood a generation ago, Britain would gain £80

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million a year and Ireland, on her doorstep, might become a market even more important than the USA.

With this in mind, 150 air-borne tycoons swooped like vultures on Dublin the day after the pact was signed. The talk was of mergers and takeovers, the ruthless co-ordination and fullest exploitation of the market shortly to be theirs. Meanwhile old-established businesses were making trembling protests at the British monopolies buying up the buildings they worked in and the land they stood on. A reflection of their concern appeared in the Fine Gael amendment vote against the pact in the Dail.

The result has been to illuminate, as with a floodlight, the realities of the class struggle in Ireland. While the medium bourgeoisie (who still own most of the wealth in the country) whined or dithered, car assembly workers paraded in hundreds in defence of their jobs. For the first time in years the Irish Labour Party separated itself off sharply from the capitalist parties on a matter of supreme national interest. It is noticeable that the British Labour Party which refused an enquiry into the Northern Ireland police state in deference to the views of 'our sister party' (the partitionist wing of the six counties divided movement) does not appear even to have asked Irish Labour for its views.

The Republican Sinn Fein movement represents the interests of the petty-bourgeois masses, who together with the workers, form the overwhelming majority of the population.

Protest meetings were held and a programme of struggle outlined. The Irish Workers' Party, which with Sinn Fein pioneered the resistance to Lemass's deal, held poster parades and public meetings. Its Christmas gathering was one of the largest in its history.

There is talk of 'uniting every shade of green and red' to defeat Lemass and establish a progressive alternative Government. The struggle will not be easy. Already the reactionary press are trying to use the 'communist bogey' to drive a wedge between Republicans, who have virtually adopted the programme of the Republican Congress of the 'thirties, and their Socialist allies. The trade unions, with their close connections with British Labour, have not yet spoken with a clear voice. But unity will grow, and clarity will grow. What is vitally important is that the British labour movement should recognise that those who are resisting the Lemass-Wilson pact are the true representatives of Irish democracy, upholding the determination of the people of England's oldest colony to determine their own political and economic life. From this conviction the forms of solidarity will emerge later.

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A NATIONAL TRANSPORT PLAN

I. Gradwell

(*Prospective Communist Parliamentary Candidate for Swindon*)

FEELINGS are running high among the railway workers of Swindon, as indeed throughout Britain, about the Government's transport policy: so high that Mr. Noel Baker, Swindon's MP, was finally provoked to write a bitterly worded critical letter to Mrs. Barbara Castle, when she was appointed Minister of Transport, expressing the railwaymen's 'acute disappointment with the Government's record so far'. He spoke of 'disastrous consequences', of 'violent opposition' to closures, of 'scepticism', 'serious frustration' and 'low morale'.

Instead of an immediate 'halt' to rail and pit closures, speedy re-nationalisation of road haulage, with plans for integration in fuel and in transport, we are confronted with renewed emphasis on that substitute for nationalisation, State holdings in private firms, whilst the run-down of the nationalised industries remains unchecked by the Labour Government.

Nowhere is swift planning for integration under public ownership more needed than in transport.

> The inactivity of the Ministry of Transport has become something of a bad joke. Worse, it is guilty of gross dereliction of duty by failing to produce plans for the proper co-ordination of transport thirteen months after Labour won power.
>
> (A. H. Kitson, JP, General Secretary of the Scottish Commercial Motormens Union, *The Highway*, December, 1965.)

There could not be a more concise and dismal summary of the progress towards one of Britain's most urgent needs. In *Transport Policy* the case for integration of all transport into one system was once more presented for approval at last year's Trades Union Congress. But what would be more to the point is a detailed plan of how various forms are to be taken into public ownership and developed; how old problems and mistakes are to be avoided. What about checking C-licences in haulage? What about the financial side? Charging? Compensation? Preventing redundancy by training and up-grading? To have nothing worked out on such points after all these years when integration under public ownership has been the policy of Labour Party and Trades Union Congress is to invite the question: are you serious?

That Mr. Kitson's estimate was correct was confirmed by the new

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Minister of Transport, Mrs. Barbara Castle, at her first press conference, when she promised that such a plan *would* be prepared. However, whether that promise materialises does not depend upon Mrs. Castle alone. The ultimate decision rests with the cabinet, which decides whether to make the money available for the plans when prepared, and whether the fight against monopoly vested interests that will be necessary is resolutely fought to a successful conclusion. In the absence of such plans Mr. S. Raymond, chairman of the British Railway Board makes public his idea of a 'Transport Highway Authority'. Mr. Raymond displays a rather child-like confidence in the altruism of the private transport operators when he suggests that they would be willing to pay the additional cost of stand-by public transport services, convenient at certain times, but not used regularly enough to be commercially viable. Will private hauliers and coach firms agree to pay to keep trains running so that they would be available when snow or floods keep their own vehicles off the road—when their one aim is to shift unpaying loads on to the publicly owned British Railways or British Road Services, and keep the profitable traffic for themselves? Will the private motorist be prepared to maintain a bus service for use on the rare occasions when he cannot use his car? Raymond must be joking. The Road Haulage Association say:

> We feel that commercial vehicle operators, in common with all road users, pay in special taxes more than their share of the costs of the roads.

That would surely be a truer reflection of their reaction to being asked to subsidise an emergency break-down transport service. In any case, a Transport Highway Authority is quite impracticable under the present conditions of mixed publicly and privately owned transport in competition with each other.

Meanwhile the Government's procrastination is leading to the negation of a publicly owned integrated system. The closure of lines and stations has gone quietly on, unabated despite the election pledge to 'halt' them. Examples are plentiful in Wiltshire, Dorsetshire, Somersetshire and points further West. It is still going, going, gone, round Swindon; Lyme Regis; on the Somerset and Dorset line—traditionally known as the 'Slow and Dirty'. Closures on the 'S. & D.' were taking place without even an alternative bus service being supplied; only vigorous local protest delayed its demise until buses are available.

There was the blatant case of the closure of the 'points and crossings shop' in Swindon's railway workshops. This 'points and cross-

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ings shop' was purpose-built and equipped only four years ago, costing £650,000, capable of providing all the needs of British Railways for this equipment. When the news came out that it was to be closed, 1,500 men from all over the works held a meeting in working hours in the condemned shop itself, pledging any action needed to keep it in production. Local union officials dissuaded them from taking direct action on the plea that the case for keeping the shop open was so strong that representations to a higher authority would surely suffice. But Mr. Raymond was adamant; it would need a subsidy of £80,000 a year to keep the shop going, because orders for half the railways' needs would have to be given to a private firm, and the other half would be insufficient to keep the Swindon shop working to capacity. The then Minister of Transport, Mr. Tom Fraser, endorsed the decision; and Mr. Harold Wilson said he was not prepared to arbitrate between the Minister and a body of workers.

So all the work goes to a private firm in Nottinghamshire, and yet another bit of British Railways is de-nationalised. Small wonder if the rail shop workers become frustrated, cynical and lukewarm in their support of the Labour Government. Nor are they slow to note the contrast with the treatment of the older shopmen who find their long service grant deducted in weekly instalments from the railways' pension scheme. (The local case of a highly respected fitter, Mr. A. E. Sumbler, who had twice been a Labour Parliamentary candidate, led to the setting up of an association to press the rights of retired men.)

The expression 'de-nationalisation by the back door' first became current in Swindon when a Tory Government lent the North British Locomotive Company £1,750,000 to buy equipment to carry out a contract that could have been done in British Railway Works. The firm shortly afterwards went broke. The best that now can be said is that the Labour Government has not given the Nottinghamshire private firm the equipment—yet. Any plan for integrated transport must certainly bring all railway workshops into public ownership.

This creeping de-nationalisation is not confined to the railshops. Part of British Road Services—the carrying of meat—has been handed over to Union International; more private airlines are to operate on routes serviced by public lines; Cunard has been given a cut in British Overseas Airways Corporation; and for the future it is proposed that private road hauliers 'feed' the liner trains—a good meal for themselves. It is high time this nonsense was ended.

Transport cannot be satisfactorily co-ordinated without integra-

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tion and integration cannot be brought about without a great extension of public ownership—rail, road haulage, road passenger transport, airlines, canals, coastal shipping and pipelines. That lesson was clear 38 years ago, from the Royal Commission on Transport, 1928. Profiting from past mistakes any compensation paid must be much less extravagant than formerly—when nationalised road haulage had to pay high prices for vehicles which were mere scrap iron. Moreover, it must not be charged to the industry, but to the national exchequer. Liaison between transport planners and national fuel planners will be essential, as the two industries are closely linked.

The over-riding consideration must not be competition between the various forms of transport as to which can make a profit, but the provision of a cheap efficient service for the public and industry, even if this entails sections being run at a loss, as a social service. Each form of transport must play the part for which it is best suited, and to the extent that it provides the most efficient service and it needs to be made clear that the workers engaged in transport should enjoy good wages, working conditions and regular employment.

It is already obvious that it will not be possible to develop the roads fast enough to reduce congestion and accommodate an ever increasing number of vehicles. A greatly improved cheap public road passenger service and all the main towns linked by an air service using helicopters would tend to slow down the increase in the number of cars. Certain types of freight will have to be allocated to the railways particularly for long hauls. With all forms of transport publicly owned the railwaymen's objection to private hauliers feeding liner trains would disappear. Indiscriminate granting of C-licences to private traders to carry their own goods would need to be strictly controlled, and proof of need established, which would greatly reduce these, in many cases, wasteful vehicles.

A new British Transport Commission with more transport experts, trade unionists and direct representatives of the public on it should be given the task of carrying out the radical changes.

The whole labour movement, and the unions in particular, should at once exert the maximum pressure on the government to implement the policy of a publicly owned integrated transport system. An indispensable part of such a campaign must be to inform the general public of the issues, to win their enthusiastic support. This would supply the essential counterbalance to the unceasing pressure, concealed and open, of the private monopolies which put their own interests first regardless of public, railwayman and transport worker.

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STEEL TURNABOUT

Alan Brown

FOR a great number of people in the labour movement, the Government's activities on steel nationalisation have been the saddest of spectacles—at least in terms of home affairs. Look at the twistings and turnings from month to month (sometimes from minute to minute), the confusion deliberately sown, the use of (not surrender to) extreme right-wing Labour MPs, the succour given to the Tories, and the cynical flouting not just of government and party policy but of deep feelings in the movement. When steel did not figure in last November's Queen's Speech, Tory leader Edward Heath jeered at Labour MPs that their Prime Minister's retreat 'looks like the biggest conversion since Bessemer invented his converter'. But this was the opposite of the truth. The greatest conversion would have taken place if the present Labour leadership had, from a socialist volition, been bent, come what may, on nationalising the steel industry. All available evidence points rather to the fact that pressure from the movement forced the issue into the first year's Labour Government programme—but that it was not sufficient, or not sufficiently persisted in, to ensure against the leadership's determination to use any escape hatch to frustrate the aims of even the broadest left-wing concensus.

If this is so, it raises the question as to whether the Left is sufficiently strong, in its present scattered and largely unorganised form, to hold the right-wing to pledges based on the will and desire of the wider movement. And this question serves only to underline the greater need—for changes in declared policy to set the Government on a more Socialist-orientated path.

The ability of the right-wing to perform its turnabout on steel was not simply a matter of the pressure *on this one issue* not being sufficiently strong or persistent. One can only conclude that the Wilsonian calculation was that the Left as a whole, and thus on a wide range of issues, was sufficiently weak in its present form to allow him to frustrate steel nationalisation (albeit with pledges that it still remains part of the longer-term programme).

On the other hand, it is on individual issues that, by counter-attacking, the Left can build its strength on a wider front. And steel provides an example of the type of issue on which the Left—*all* the Left—can advance with the maximum unity and, of equal importance, the utmost cohesion. Emphasis and ultimate aims might vary, but

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not the firm common denominator of the nationalisation of the industry, outlined in Labour's own election programme and the ensuing White Paper. The issues of compensation (on which there is widespread unease) and of worker participation (involving the question of stronger trade union structure) are also central issues on which there is considerable unity of thought and purpose.

Let us look briefly at some aspects of the steel affair, with this point in mind. *First*, this is an issue deeply ingrained in the trade union, labour and communist movement. It is now 35 years since the Trades Union Congress called for steel nationalisation, and 32 since it put forward a plan of action (based on proposals from the steelmen's own union). This policy was re-affirmed on the last occasion in 1963. Before the last election, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation and the National Union of Blast Furnacemen underlined the need for nationalisation, referring to such issues as production levels, short-time working, insecurity and the need for a fair return from the industry to the workers in it. This is no issue of a day, but a fundamental, long-term demand of the whole movement.

Second, the Labour Party election pledge and commitment on it was absolute. 'Private ownership in steel,' it said, 'will be replaced by public ownership and control'. It appeared in the first Queen's Speech, and was followed in the first session by a White Paper making the case for nationalisation. It was probably no exaggeration to say that the steel White Paper presented the best case the present government has made for any of its legislation. Whatever criticisms there may be among the Left of the detailed proposals, this document presented an unanswerable case for nationalisation. It was backed up and strengthened by Minister of Power, Fred Lee, when he introduced it to the House of Commons.

Third, steel is a keystone of the British economy, control of which is essential to any real planning of industrial and economic development and expansion. As the White Paper itself detailed, the industry had sales of over £1,000 million in 1964, employed more than 315,000 workers, spent £130 million a year in capital development between 1960 and 1964 (11 per cent of all investment in manufacturing industries) and provides basic materials for industries on which the total economy depends. The employers have admitted to price-fixing, the Government has criticised its monopolistic character and said that it would be wrong for future production plans to be 'dependent on the initiative of private interests'. It has also been stated that

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no form of control, short of ownership, would be sufficient to deal with the steel industry.

Yet we are expected to believe, in face of these facts, that it is two right-wing Labour MPs—Messrs. Wyatt and Donnelly—who stand between the British people and realising the aim of nationally-owned steel. The call has been made for Mr. Wyatt's ego to be thus placed as the effective source of power on this issue, it is plainly not so. The road-block to steel nationalisation lies not in the foothills of the Labour right-wing, but at its peaks.

Neither the Wyatt-Donnelly chorus, however, nor the Liberals (chewing away at their imaginary red meat of politics) are given as the official excuse for halting progress to a steel take-over. The actual version—as expounded by Wilson, Gunter and the rest—is more outrageous still. On November 9, 1965, Mr. Wilson told the Commons that 'the issue is no longer whether—that has been decided; the issue is when, and that is the question of priorities'. This was followed by Tory laughter, and then Mr. Wilson declared:

> It is for any Hon. Member, opposite or on this side, who feels that it should be brought forward this session to say what other major Bills should be sacrificed, because they would be major Bills.

Winding up the same debate, Mr. Gunter said that he also believed 'it is a question of determining the priorities', then declared:

> As a great democratic party we have given priority to the things that people want.

The confidence trick in two keys. We are told by the people responsible for giving a pledge nearly 18 months ago, and for producing a White Paper setting out their detailed intentions, that steel nationalisation has no priority, and that it cannot be produced in the name of democracy ('a great democratic party . . .').

But at least the record speaks for itself. The Prime Minister put steel nationalisation in the *first* Queen's Speech, and took out any mention of it in the *second*. The priorities established by the Government itself, had not changed (nor, for that matter, had Wyatt or the Liberals). The fact is that something else had changed: the evaluation of the right-wing as to its ability to sell the movement short yet again.

Here the question of the power and strength of the left-wing forces comes in. For in the classic battle between the ruling class and its allies on the one side and working class interests and socialists on the other, there are no such things as pure 'priorities'. Issues are decided by the relative strengths of the two contending sides. The

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only thing which can put steel nationalisation back into its rightful place in the Government's programme is an organised, united and effective campaign by all sections of the Left, the grounds for which are in existence. Such a campaign would find its echo and its support in the trade union branches, districts and national bodies; in the Labour Party, Communist Party, and Co-operative organisations throughout the country; in workshops and factories, mines and shipyards. Harnessed together, with a common aim, that is where true power lies in this situation.

STUDENTS IN CONFERENCE

Nicola Seyd

THE National Union of Students represents 290,000 students in nearly 600 colleges in England and Wales and overlaps with the Union of Students in Ireland in respect of the Six Counties. Its council meetings, twice a year, are gatherings of 800 or so delegates and observers from technical, teacher-training, art and other colleges and universities.

Towards the end of last term, their meeting in Margate was visited by Mr. Reginald Prentice, the Minister of State responsible for higher education. Earlier in the year the Government had omitted even their normal consultation before announcing the new scale of student grants. But Mr. Prentice turned up to apologise, in effect.

The change of attitude is perhaps explained by what *The Guardian* called 'the quite unexpected fury' with which students had received a suggestion in a ministerial circular that there should be consideration of the introduction of a loan element in student grants. Already students have been pressing for a change in the arrangement which leaves them with the problem of repaying national insurance contributions when they graduate. The prospect that some of the funds, felt to be necessary for their courses, should leave them with a burden of debt at the start of their careers, horrified students. It led to quite unprecedented suggestions for a national student strike.

Before Prentice spoke, the council had unanimously agreed to instruct the Executive 'to take all necessary and feasible steps to prevent the introduction of such a system' while pressing on with the union's basic demands, namely 'the complete abolition of the Means Test; the raising of the level of grants to provide full maintenance; and the crediting of full-time students with National

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Insurance contributions.' Mr. Prentice either underestimated the powers of perception of his audience or else he was confident that the students' representatives would be content to discuss the subject heatedly and then accept his plans reluctantly. The delegates listened keenly having been led to expect that he would issue an official assurance that the idea of loans was not on.

He began by saying he had been a student himself once; that there was not enough education and there was social inequality in it; that higher education could be expanded without loss of standards and that the six month delay in college building was an unfortunate necessity. But on loans the government had no policy yet: every possibility needed to be looked at, though loans were preferable to a supplement to grants. In reply to questions, he said they could no more abolish the Means Test this decade than they could build day nurseries. The reaction to this statement was such that most delegates were in favour of a resolution envisaging a possible one-day strike with voluntary social work, though this could not be voted on for procedural reasons.

Again, perhaps Mr. Prentice was clever enough to rely on the diversion of attention which occurred the following day. A commission had been reviewing their international affiliations and a majority of the commission, backed by the Executive, recommended affiliation to the American-financed 'International Student Conference'. However, the Council gave a two-thirds majority support to a minority report, advocating affiliation neither to it, nor to the considerably larger International Union of Students which has a generally anti-imperialist and left-wing orientation.

This decision was interpreted in the press, which got mildly excited on the subject, as a 'left-wing victory'. In fact, though there would hardly be any left-wingers supporting the 'International Student Conference', the result was in the main due to the delegates who did not want the union involved in cold war politics at all. Even left-wingers were not advocating membership of the International Union of Students, because there is very little in common between the anti-imperialist political preoccupations of the International Union of Students and the primary concern of the National Union of Students with education and students' amenities.

This concern was reflected in many of the other decisions of the Council. The executive was instructed:

(a) to campaign to get for post-graduate students an income comparable to his earning potential in industry;

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(b) to raise the level of its efforts, along with their members, to obtain a new machinery for negotiating grants as well as an early revision of the present scale;

(c) to publicise the bad accommodation position;

(d) to bring all possible pressure to bear on the government to resume the deferred college building;

(e) to issue a memorandum seeking student representation on academic boards; and

(f) to press the government about insurance anomalies.

The union's concern with education overlaps with the interests of the working population at several points. Co-operation with the various teachers' organisations was sought in trying to insulate educational expenditure from economic fluctuations and in trying to get capital investment in training to keep up with increased numbers of students. Support for the teachers' pay claim was expressed. The executive was also instructed to ensure that students got the rate for the job in their vacation work.

General political questions are excluded from discussion but they do break through in various ways. One resolution drew attention to student aspects of the Immigration White Paper and called for its *withdrawal*; another condemned the Smith Government's attacks on education in Southern Rhodesia and instructed the Executive to urge the British government to *uphold its responsibilities*.

Politics were also taken up in another way. The student organisations of the various Parties send observers to the Council and the Liberal, Labour and Communist representatives took the opportunity to issue a joint statement on Vietnam, which they sent to the United States to the 'Students for a Democratic Society', signed also by many delegates.

The lesson of the Margate Council is that students here are catching up with their contemporaries in France and the United States,* in militancy and organisation. The interests and demands of students expressed in their organisations closely parallel those of the labour movement. It remains to be seen how long it will take for the students and the labour movement to draw together. The immediate common interest is the democratisation of higher education which is still predominantly a non-working-class preserve.

* See 'Student Militancy in America and Europe', *Labour Monthly*, October, 1965.

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FROM RIGHT TO LEFT

R. Page Arnot

IN the year 1909 a young man had just passed his Law exams, after having had to leave school earlier than expected and having in three separate semesters abroad acquired a working knowledge of three European languages. He was gifted with a good memory, a capacity for hard work, and a strong constitution. Whatever he did, he did thoroughly, whether it was mastering lawbooks or conducting cases, and he always put the interests of his client first. As a result he speedily rose to the top of his profession, and even before he was forty, was adjudged 'the first lawyer in the country' and was so spoken of by a member of the highest judicial tribunal in the British Empire. Another member of that august body, the famous Lord Haldane, urged him to consider becoming one of the two 'Law Officers of the Crown' in a future Labour Government.

This was D. N. Pritt who had been brought up as a Tory amid Tory surroundings, who had been a regular open-air speaker for the Tory party in his early twenties ('presuming at the age of twenty-two to expound politics to the masses') until the great railway strike of 1911 set him thinking and asking questions; who, by the time he had got the answers, 'had' as he says, 'travelled some way on my journey'; who had in his middle twenties crossed to the Liberal party; who had in the 1914-18 war achieved a Socialist outlook, having by 1917 reached a degree of enlightenment that made him welcome the Russian revolution; and who then, as a Socialist, joined the Labour Party as soon as it was open to individual membership. When Ramsay MacDonald early in 1928 followed Haldane's approach, sent for Pritt, and asked him 'Will you become a Law Officer in my next Government? We very much want you to,' Pritt declined and recommended another 'much better for the Party'.

Ramsay MacDonald must have felt like the Laird o'Cockpen when his advances were rejected, and 'dumbfounded, he turned awa', awa' '. Two years later Pritt was again approached and asked if he would agree to stand for Parliament at a convenient by-election with the understanding that he would become Solicitor-General as soon as there was a vacancy. But by late 1931, after only 27 months of office, the second Labour Government had collapsed, and the Labour Party had been well-nigh wrecked from within by its own most prominent leaders. When MacDonald with Philip Snowden and J. H. Thomas went on to form a coalition with the Tories and

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the Liberals, most of such Labour lawyers as were in Parliament went with them. After all, they were for the most part, simple Liberal careerists, who now thought they had found a still better band waggon to leap upon. But for Pritt, who was a Socialist, it must have been at once a painful shock as well as a stage in political education.

He went the next year as one of a delegation to visit the USSR, at the same time as Sidney and Beatrice Webb, then at work on their great book *Soviet Communism: a new civilisation.* His report on the legal system of the USSR showed that he (like Sidney and Beatrice Webb) had been greatly impressed by the Soviet Courts: it was the first thing he had ever written for publication. Thereafter he was to become one of the clearest and most acceptable exponents of that system of socialism both in writing and in the innumerable meetings that he began to address throughout the country. But it was a shock for him to find, bit by bit, that a friendly attitude to the USSR was not in favour at Labour Party headquarters, or at the TUC or in their *Daily Herald* then on the downgrade towards its final ignominious extinction. As he says of the Labour Party in his autobiography,* 'I had not yet sensed the deep hostility of its leaders to the USSR': his own political development however had been advanced by the visit. From this time onwards Pritt came more closely in contact with the working class and the people of Britain through the meetings he continued to address—often at the indefatigable rate of five meetings a week. Hitherto Law had been applied to politics. Henceforward politics were to be applied to Law.

A considerable portion of his book (yet in some ways all too little) is devoted to political cases in the Law Courts. School children are told of famous trials such as that of John Hampden or the Seven Bishops in 1688: their schooling might well be supplemented by the relevant chapters of Pritt, who in a noble passage sums up on political defences as follows:

> For those barristers who have political views, the duty to conduct political cases really transforms the profession into something of a mission. Even apart from political cases, the proper carrying on of a barrister's profession can be a pretty fine thing, in spite of the indifference to social values which—in Britain—often goes with it; but when barristers of progressive political views carry on their profession with a full regard to their social and political responsibilities, and particularly when they actually conduct political cases, they should be really proud and happy men; for they are serving their country's true interest day by day and case by case whilst they are carrying on their profession and earning their daily bread. (p. 137.)

* The Autobiography of D. N. Pritt. Part One. From Right to Left. 1965. Lawrence & Wishart, London. 320 pp., 42/-.

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Soon there came the great occasion when international politics was thus linked with Law when the German Fascists came to power in 1933. To strengthen their grip and for the purpose of destroying all other parties, all trade unions and all democratic institutions the Nazis committed the atrocity of setting fire to the Reichstag in Berlin in order to accuse the Communists of a crime for which they themselves were responsible. Pritt, horrified by what was happening in Germany, had already taken up a standpoint so early as to enable him to say with truth in this book 'I can claim to have been among the first in Britain—outside the Communist Party—to oppose Fascism'.

On the Reichstag Fire a legal commission of inquiry was mooted: and seven lawyers from as many countries (and each of the highest repute in their profession) were asked to form a tribunal. Pritt was invited to be a member of the tribunal and agreed. He wrote:

> I hesitated for a moment, not from any political doubts (although I met with frowns from the leadership of the Labour Party, who conveyed to me their disapproval of my 'unwisdom' in doing anything that might be helpful to Communists) but from professional considerations. I had been brought up in the strict traditions of the English Bar, with its extreme respect for Courts (even foreign Courts); it was a strange idea for British lawyers that individual lawyers, having no jurisdiction or authority, should assume the functions of a Court and pass 'judgement' on a foreign government, or members of it, or indeed upon anybody, especially in respect of matters actually pending before a regular Court. (p. 53.)

In spite of the Tory-Liberal-MacDonaldite coalition government, then carrying on a vendetta against the Soviet Union, and beginning its process (that culminated in Munich) of kow-towing to Hitler Fascism, and in spite of the repeated efforts of the Foreign Office headed by the spineless Sir John Simon to thwart the enquiry, the Tribunal duly sat and Pritt presided. Its findings are part of history and the story briefly told here in forty pages might well be made the BBC textbook for talks.

From this moment onward Pritt's fame, so far mostly confined to the legal profession, spread throughout the Labour Party and all other political organisations in Britain—and throughout Europe.

Two years later when Pritt entered the House of Commons he was immediately elected by his fellow members to the front bench: and when a year or more afterwards it came to the choosing of the Executive Committee of the Labour Party he was put up, and elected forthwith. The rank and file of the Labour movement (to the extent that they are represented in local Labour Parties) had chosen him

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as worthy to be amongst their seven leaders who sat beside the Trade Union bosses on the Labour Party Executive Committee.

From 1933 onwards, this book, while continuing to be an autobiography of signal merit, begins to have interwoven with it the essential history of the labour movement, of British political parties and of outstanding events in Europe and other Continents, in which Pritt played a notable part. It is also to some extent a grammar of politics in that many of your questions are answered as Pritt explains what the work of a Member of Parliament is, what he can do to help his constituents and how best to do it, and what the work of a Divisional Labour Party is or should be. There is much else in it besides the writing with its wit and lucidity.

The reader can follow Pritt on his journey in search of the companionship of honest Socialists. He found them in growing numbers amongst the rank and file of the trade unions and other working class organisations, but in very small numbers amongst the chiefs of the Labour Party. Even before the Labour Party in Parliament had become Her Majesty's Opposition, the outlook of its leaders on matters abroad was frequently indistinguishable from that of the Foreign Office. When in 1936 Anthony Eden put forward his policy which favoured the Fascists against the interests of the democratically-elected Government of Spain the Right-wing leaders of the TUC and the Labour Party said 'Ditto to that'. Twenty years later in 1956 the same Eden, plunging this country into war at Suez, was supported in Parliament by Hugh Gaitskell, who was afterwards compelled to eat his words. The subservience of the right-wing leaders to the policy of Neville Chamberlain that culminated in Munich, was shown when they bade him God speed on his mission to Hitler. This was reinforced by their hatred of the Soviet Union—so much so that in 1939-1940, in the midst of the 'phoney war' by land against Nazi Germany they were backing the use of British Armed Forces in Finland to support the butcher Mannerheim against the Red Army. When Pritt wrote a Penguin Special in an opposite sense (it was entitled *Must the War Spread?*) the Labour Party Executive Committee hastily voted for his expulsion from the Labour Party (as they had expelled both Cripps and Aneurin Bevan the year before).

Pritt, thereafter an Independent Labour MP, not only continued his good work, but went on from strength to strength as the reader will find in this candid chronicle of his life and of our own times.

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Document of the Month

HO CHI MINH TO THE POPE

(On December 28, 1965, President Ho Chi Minh sent the following Message in reply to the Pope. It was felt that our readers might like to have the full text of this letter available for reference—Ed., L.M.)

To His Holiness Paulus 6,
Vatican City.

I HAVE THE honour to acknowledge receipt of your message and wish to extend my thanks for the interest you show in the problem of peace in Vietnam.

The Vietnamese people eagerly want peace to reconstruct their country, but genuine peace is inseparable from genuine national independence.

The aggression by the American imperialists against Vietnam is the deep origin and direct cause of the present war in Vietnam. For more than 10 years now, the U.S. has systematically violated the 1954 Geneva agreements on Vietnam and deeply interfered in South Vietnam with the aim of transforming it into a military base and a new type of colony of U.S. imperialism. It has established in South Vietnam a regime of Fascist dictatorship for carrying out a policy of savage and bloody repression of all patriots who long for peace and national reunification.

From 1954 to 1960 it committed monstrous crimes: conducted 160,000 raids, killed 170,000 persons, wounded or rendered invalid 800,000, imprisoned 400,000 and concentrated 5,000,000 into 'strategic hamlets', a kind of concentration camps.

Since 1961, the U.S. government has waged a 'special war', heaped untold sufferings upon our compatriots in South Vietnam, widely used barbarous means of modern war: toxic chemicals, gas, napalm bombs and phosphorous bombs, killed women, old people and children, destroyed villages, churches, pagodas, hospitals, schools, crops and cattle . . . At present, nearly 200,000 U.S. troops have been introduced into South Vietnam and are directly taking part in the fighting. U.S. B.52's of the SAC (Strategic Air Command) are conducting massive bombings, striking especially at the civil population.

To save their desperate situation in South Vietnam, the U.S. has launched an air war of destruction against the DRV, the U.S. aircraft are day and night bombarding North Vietnam zones of civilian population, hospitals, sanatoria, leper colonies, schools, churches, markets, dams . . . causing serious losses in human lives and material property. The crimes of the U.S. imperialists, comparable with those of Hitler, have aroused profound indignation among the whole of the peace and justice loving mankind. The South Vietnamese people as a whole, united as one man, under the clear-sighted leadership of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, are fighting heroically and are determined to fight as long as the U.S. aggressors still trample upon the soil of their Fatherland. The air war against North Vietnam has met with failure: it will never succeed in leading the Vietnamese people to accept the conditions of capitulation dictated by the U.S. imperialists. The U.S. leaders want war and not peace. The talks about unconditional negotiations made by the U.S. president are merely a

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manoeuvre to cover up his plans for war intensification and extension in Vietnam.

The U.S. government must completely and unconditionally end its bombings and all acts of war against the DRV, stop its aggression in South Vietnam, withdraw its troops and armaments from South Vietnam and let the Vietnamese people settle their internal affairs themselves, in short, recognise the 4 points of the DRV, a concentrated expression of the main provisions of the 1954 Geneva Agreements on Vietnam, and really prove it by concrete deeds. Let the U.S. put an end to its aggression, then peace will immediately be restored in Vietnam.

The Vietnamese people and the government of the DRV sincerely thank the people of the world for their warm support to the Vietnamese people against the U.S. imperialist aggressors. Please accept my most respectful salutations.

BOOK REVIEWS

The Comedians
Graham Greene
Bodley Head, 312 pp., 25s.

SO MANY INTELLECTUALS have praised Grahame Greene for so many years that the dust jackets of his books are golden with the sort of intellectual praise all writers long for; but though I have read a great deal by Greene and about Greene, I have never yet read any critic who seems to understand what he is trying to do.

More often than not the critics praise the wrong things in Greene: they are often attracted to his limitations rather than his largesse. This is, I suppose, inevitable since the burden Greene carries so publicly is an intellectual one. This is what attracts the other intellectuals. But what often they miss is his highly attuned sense of history and of human ideological involvement and of passionate regard for very simple values. They miss these things because he hedges them around so thickly with all the required elements of despair, corruption, religion and the awful taint of human failure.

The critics will surely make the same mistake with his new book *The Comedians*, which is very richly encrusted with the usual Greene camouflage. He is going to blind them with his dual morality, but if you look closely you can see quite clearly in this book that his indulgence in corruption is really an obvious protection against any intellectual suggestion that he is, in fact, thoroughly committed.

In *The Comedians* he deals with the same tortuous moral issues which he has always dealt with, only with each new book he gets closer and closer to the truth which no other writer in English (except maybe Sillitoe) has ever recognised, let alone written about. Greene's Haiti is a black republic as corrupt as any South American brown republic or Asian yellow republic or European white republic that has been ruined by that vulgar American terror called 'the bulwark against communism'.

Narrated by a Protestant-Catholic (only former Protestants have the liberalism of Greene's kind of Catholicism, although this one is supposedly born a Catholic) the story weaves a brutal and corrupt and sensual and purulent way through a sexual-murder - political - religious - racial situation which is ridiculous and tragic and monstrous.

But Greene's preoccupation with rot and decay is justified, because if there *is* rot and decay, then let a man who is

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fascinated with the awful mess write about it—even lovingly if necessary. Greene does exactly that, but he at least chooses his subjects well. A Congo or a Korea or a Formosa or a Haiti are the right subjects for him to write about because they characterise our own situation better than we realise in our well-camouflaged democracy. What do we know about the world? Next to nothing. Our modern English literature is so pale and so provincial, so contemplative of its own little navel that Greene's vast look at real corruption comes almost as a pleasure.

All the characters in *The Comedians* are perfectly impossible. The three main characters, Smith, Brown and Jones, are quite believable because they are truthfully fantastic. Brown is the morally-burdened Greene narrator, Jones is an affectionately conceived fake who finds his vocation in a moment of luck when he lives out his lies fighting a 'war' of liberation, and Smith is an American so innocent that death, murder and political violence do not divert him from his determination to vegetarianise the underfed world. Smith is a good American nonetheless, and Greene's profoundly European contempt for ignorant America turns here into an almost gentle affection: in fact, Smith is the other side of *The Quiet American*.

The Comedians is more valuable politically than Greene will probably admit intellectually, and when you get used to the rot, the book gets a grip on you like a biting wasp. For me, Greene remains the only writer in English who is trying, on the very highest level and with great literary skill, to interpret our times with anything like a serious purpose, and for this one forgives him a great deal. *The Comedians* leaves everything else being written these days very far behind, and we ought to be grateful that we have one author in our language who knows what is at stake and has the courage to write about it.

JAMES ALDRIDGE.

Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy
Joseph A. Schumpeter
Unwin University Books, 432 pp. 20s.

THE APPEARANCE of this well-known work in a (relatively) cheap edition is not without interest. In many ways the author and his work occupied a unique position. Coming from Austria, he was evidently much influenced by Marx in his younger days, and this fact made him stand intellectually head and shoulders above his American colleagues. In America he became, virtually, *the* economic ideologist of American monopoly-capitalism, with his emphasis on the role of the large-scale capitalist *entrepreneur* as 'innovator'. Yet in this present work, while defending modern capitalism as a system of production, he forecasted its historical doom (although regretting this). Capitalism, in his opinion, was in decline, mainly because it had lost its former moral and ideological hold: 'the scheme of values of capitalist society is losing its hold not only upon the public mind but also upon the "capitalist" stratum itself'. In Marxian terms this could be expressed as a growing contradiction between 'superstructure' and 'base'. In many ways it is an unusually objective book, if also perverse in places. In an address to the American Economic Association in 1949 entitled 'The March into Socialism', which is appended to the present edition, he shows himself impressed with 'the present state of inflationary pressure' and its omens for the disintegration of the system—an inflationary situation which he evidently thought had come to stay.

MAURICE DOBB.

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'We need your magazine to bring our rambling thoughts to a proper conclusion. In it we see where all the varying lines of fact, opinion and argument meet and to what purpose'. Thanks to our Plymouth reader for a neat summing up and to all friends for their cash and comments.

Helen Falber.

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